

NEWS

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Former Passaic City Councilman and Former Paterson School Board
Member Sentenced to Federal Prison Terms for Accepting Bribes

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TRENTON – Former Passaic City Council member Marcellus Jackson and former Paterson Board of Education member Chauncey I. Brown, III, were sentenced today to federal prison terms of 25 and 20 months, respectively, for accepting bribes in exchange for their official assistance in attempting to steer public insurance brokerage contracts to an FBI undercover business, Acting U.S. Attorney Ralph J. Marra, Jr. announced.

U.S. District Judge Anne E. Thompson also ordered Marcellus Jackson, 39, to pay a \$15,000 fine and to serve three years of supervised release upon the completion of his prison term. Judge Thompson similarly ordered Brown, 49, to serve three years of supervised release upon the completion of his prison term. Brown was not fined.

In sentencing Jackson and Brown, Judge Thompson granted the government's motions for a downward departure under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines based upon substantial cooperation in the investigation, which assisted in the prosecution and conviction of other individuals.

Thompson continued Jackson's release on a \$200,000 bond and Brown's release on a \$300,000 bond pending surrender to officials with the U.S. Bureau of Prisons.

Jackson was arrested on Sept. 6, along with 10 other public officials and one private individual. Brown was arrested on Aug. 20, 2008. The arrests resulted from a public corruption investigation that progressed from southern to northern New Jersey.

On Dec. 18, 2007, Jackson pleaded guilty before Judge Thompson, to a one-count criminal Information that charged him with attempted extortion under color of official right. At his plea hearing, Jackson specifically admitted to accepting four corrupt cash payments between January 2007 and August 2007, ranging from \$2,500 to \$6,000, in exchange for his official assistance in attempting to obtain City of Passaic insurance brokerage contracts for the undercover company. As part of the scheme, Jackson voted against two Passaic City Council resolutions relating to insurance brokerage contracts, which had the effect of favoring the undercover company. Jackson also admitted accepting corrupt payments in exchange for arranging meetings with other public officials to obtain insurance business for the undercover company. (The Information to which Jackson pleaded guilty put the total amount of corrupt payments he accepted at approximately \$26,000.)

On Dec. 8, 2008, Brown pleaded guilty before Judge Thompson to a one-count criminal Information which charged attempted extortion under color of official right. At his plea hearing, Brown admitted that, between September 2006 and December 2006, he accepted corrupt payments totaling approximately \$13,000 in exchange for his official assistance in attempting to obtain Paterson Board of Education insurance business for the undercover

company.

In determining the actual sentences, Judge Thompson consulted the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors, including acceptance of responsibility. The judge, however, has wide discretion and is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all of that time.

Marra credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun in Newark, for the investigation.

Marra also thanked Assistant Prosecutors and Investigators with the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Theodore F.L. Housel, for their assistance in the investigation.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Christopher J. Gramiccioni and David A. Bocian of the U.S. Attorneys Office Special Prosecutions Division.

– end –

Defense counsel:

Jackson - Miles R. Feinstein, Esq. Clifton

Brown - Aslan Soobzokov, Esq. Paterson